

Musing #40—Romans Introduction

From the early days of my conversion to Christ in 1972, I have always felt that Romans was one of the books in our Bible that seemed to carry a special power in the breadth of its knowledge and enlightenment to God and His ways.

I am preparing a Musing series on the book of Romans. It will be a “very brief” collection that I am editing, and reducing from my extensive notes from many years of teaching on the book of Romans.

It was an easy decision to place this series into my regular “Musings” that go to a small, but important group of special friends. Each of you, of course, are encouraged to pass the series, and any of my Musings, to those in your circle who might be encouraged and enlightened.

In what was likely the Apostle Paul’s final letter to the body of Christ, written to his good friend Timothy, he wrote...

Study to show yourself approved unto God, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 —Paul had challenged Timothy in his first letter to him to... read the Scriptures and use what you learn to exhort and encourage others to grow in grace.

Reading the Bible is one thing, but Paul challenges us to “study”—to learn, interpret, and explain the depths of his message of God’s truth to those in our circle of believers..

My teaching of Romans (and other books of the Bible) has been in Sunday school classes and home groups over many years. Of course my notes for teaching have been gathered from the many saints who have gone before me. Many left lengthy commentaries, study books, random writings along with tapes, and their teaching at churches and conferences where they acquired knowledge on the truths from Paul’s letter to the church in Rome written in the year 57, after Christ’s resurrection and return to the Father.

Books, papers, tapes, sermons, phone calls, questions, and learning from so many who I came to appreciate over the years. I gratefully include just a few with names like:

William Newell, Ray Stedman, Charles Swindoll, Ian Thomas, DeVerne Fromke, John MacArthur, Martin Lloyd-Jones, H.A. Ironside, Peter Lord, Jack Taylor, Chuck Solomon, Miles Stanford, Lee LeFebre, Watchman Nee, Arthur Pink, Oswald Chambers, and so many more. Many of them became reliable friends who I often leaned on for insight to God's message to His people.

To each of them I am so grateful for their study, their commitment, their discipline, and their insights—as God revealed to them His glory, power, and ways for His saints. Most are at home now with their Lord. What a joy it will be to visit with them again in our eternal home—God's glorious kingdom that awaits His children. For now: A heartfelt "Thank You!" to all of them.

A Personal Checkup

Before we begin our study I would like each of you to consider your own faith and salvation. In our counseling over the years, my wife and I worked with mostly those who profess to be Christians. It was very common, when asked about their beliefs, to get comments of doubt regarding their personal salvation—often an uncertainty of their acceptance by God. Some were caught in the tangled web of past sins, and some in the reality of their own narcissistic view of themselves as above "real sinners like Hitler, Capone, and those evil people in our prisons."

The following thoughts are taken from an article written by Skip Heitzig in a recent *Decision Magazine*. He was making a reference to the *righteousness* that is taught in the book of Romans, and he noted:

- In Romans, the word righteousness appears either as righteousness or righteous, or just, or justified—the same word group—60 different times. So the theme of the book is the righteousness of God or 'How to Get Right with God.' The righteousness of God is the one phrase Martin Luther, 508 years ago, struggled with, and it was this very text that set him free and changed his life.

- The Gospel was powerful enough to change Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle. It was powerful enough to save 3,000 in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It was

powerful enough to convert thousands in the First and Second Great Awakening, and it was powerful enough to move 2.2 million people to say yes to Jesus Christ under the ministry of Billy Graham. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

- The word believe means much more than just a head belief. It means that you put your confidence in, and you put your whole weight on your thought in Christ. ...**as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of god, to those who believe in His name.** John 1:12 — You put your confidence in Him; you commit yourself to Christ without reservation.

- It means you're saved from hell. It means you're saved from the judgment... It means that when you die, you go to Heaven. Without Christ, you can't have all of that. But when you come to Christ, He changes you. **'If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you can be saved.'** Romans 10:9

By God's Grace Alone

In his classic, *Romans Verse by Verse*, William. R. Newell presents some penetrating thoughts regarding grace:

- There being no cause in the creature why grace should be shown, the creature must be moved from trying to give cause to God for His care.
- He [the believer] has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing! He is not on probation.
- As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the cross, and Christ is his Life.”
- Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them.
- To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.
- Rely on God's chastening (child training) hand as a mark of His kindness.

- To ‘hope to be better’ (hence acceptable) is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.
- To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself.
- To be discouraged is unbelief—as to God’s purpose and plan of blessing for you.”
- To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.
- The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.
- Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow, but does not always do so—in proper measure.

A Final Thought

The series on Romans will be sent out, like my Musings, on a regular basis, about every three weeks. I taught a theology class at Colorado Christian University for a few years. I learned there to adjust a two hour lesson to less than an hour to include questions. So I will try to keep each study to just a few pages (3 to 5). Some will cover an entire chapter of Romans, others (like chapter 1, or chapters 6–8), will require more than one, or two, lessons—due to the importance of being brief with so many key topics. This will be a study covering several months, which helps us to “soak in it” for days—what God wants each of us to learn and receive.

For those who get my Musings—may you take the time to pick up a word, a thought, a few insights from the lessons in the series... something that will expand your understanding and bring a fresh enlightenment to God’s powerful word to His people. I, of course, encourage you to pass my Musings along to others for their growth and understanding.

God’s richest blessings to you, as we grow in the Lord and bear fruit for the Kingdom—the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Bride of Christ. — RA